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PICKS

Grace Jones' "Groove to the Rhythm" and Mick Jagger's "Hard Woman," which take a byte out of life as we know it. Rockin'!

Richard Meltzer, author, poet, postbop freak, columnist, the very first rock critic (he hangs his head in shame) and King of the Ellipsis, has spent the last two months reading *Doctor Sax,* "the only novel Kerouac wrote completely on marijuana, as opposed to speed . . . it's a hard read." Usually he gives up on a book sooner, but he wants to finish this one. Before *Doctor Sax,* he read a couple of stupid murder mysteries, including one by Gertrude Stein. He recommends *The Palm-Wine Drinkard,* a novel trendy about 10 years ago written by Amos Tutola, a speaker of Yoruba, and replete with crazy leaps in syntax and stories made more bizarre by being told in a different tongue. And *Ham-on Rye,* Charles Bukowski's latest novel, in which he reveals the source of his lechery as the bad acne that he suffered in the '30s. "That's sort of incredible."

John Rechy, best-selling novelist, admits: "You know we usually lie about these things, don't you? I'll tell you that I'm reading all of Proust, *Wuthering Heights,* Gertrude Stein just before bedtime, Joyce and Shakespeare." Which turns out to be at least partially truthful — he's assigned these authors in connection with a novel-writing course he's teaching at USC. For himself, it's Samuel Beckett's *Company,* and *Concrete,* a "superb" novel by Thomas Bernhard, books which he no doubt bought at **A Different Light** (4014 Santa Monica Blvd., 213-668-0629) because "they've been so wonderful," and **Chatterton's Bookshop** (1818 N. Vermont Ave., 213-664-3882) because of the selection. His soundtrack? Bartok's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste, Salome* by Richard Strauss or something by Billy Idol.

Norman Spinrad created an exotic interstellar world for his latest novel, *Child of Fortune.* But his work-in-progress will take on the even more exotic stars of the music industry. His "cybernetic rock & roll novel" will give him a great excuse to release a title song and music video to publicize the book — a preferable alternative to talk shows. Dangerous Visions (13603 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks; 818-986-6963) is his source for the usual combination of science fiction and Latin American magic realism. Books he's reading include *Lucid Dreaming* by Stephen LaBerge; *Count Zero* by William Gibson; *Robotics,* edited by Marvin Minsky; and *Sushi* by Mia Detrick, "a good book to have on hand"; and *The Entropy Exhibition,* by Colin Greenland, a hard-to-find British book. "It's partly about me, so I'm reading it." It's hard to get him to mention a type of music he doesn't like. He listens to reggae, heavy metal, mainstream rock, classical and "weird electronic rock," a form he's trying out his music-writing chops in. He usually buys cassettes. "I think records are an obsolete technology and a pain in the ass."

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